



Ortofon Cadenza Red (£795)

Ortofon started building moving-coils in 1948, and made no other kind of cartridge until 1969, when its first moving-magnets appeared. So the Cadenza Red has a long pedigree.

That distinctive body shape first appeared in 1998, with Ortofon's 80th anniversary cartridge, the MC Jubilee. The same metal casting was used for the Kontrapunkt series from 2002, and again in the current Cadenza range launched in 2009. While the top model Cadenza Black has a boron cantilever and Shibata stylus like the MC Jubilee, the Bronze uses Ortofon's Replicant stylus. The Cadenza Blue effectively replaced the Kontrapunkt B, using a ruby cantilever and FG stylus.

Finally, the Cadenza Red comes with a more basic line-contact 8x40µm stylus on an aluminium cantilever. A new coil-winding technique has been used and the pole-pieces re-designed, while the body's central fill-in section is now metal, as well as the main shell.

When mounted, the cartridge pivots on the small ridge on its top, and the result is a rigid three-point fixing. Care has to be taken to keep the cartridge perfectly vertical, and as the bolts thread into blind holes, they need to be the right length. The brass ones supplied are fine for most arms, but need to be shortened for thinner headshells such as the Thorens 309 type. Once installed, the cartridge clearly worked well at the recommended 2.5g downforce.

CALM AND ORDERLY

From the start, the Cadenza Red dispensed an air of calm. It was tonally neutral, with a smooth and natural mid and treble. It wasn't over-bright, and those who seek a strong treble presence might find it a little 'polite'. But it wasn't lacking in life or musical communication.

Bass was accurate, extended and open-sounding, helping the cartridge's ability to offer realistic stereo perspectives. It never sounded forced or flurried, but in its

RIGHT: Ridged top creates a firm three-point mounting, but care must be taken to maintain correct azimuth

unstressed manner made you want to carry on listening.

Starting again with *The King James Version*, the Ortofon brought the band to life invitingly. It conveyed the sound of the acoustic double-bass more convincingly than the Clearaudio, for example. Brass had real attack, yet without sounding congested or hard. It sounded really lucid on James' 'Corner Pocket' trumpet solo.

It wasn't as if the other cartridges in the group had audibly mistracked here, but the Ortofon sailed through with a naturalness that came from its really secure tracking. 'Sultans Of Swing' became a well-balanced, truly rocking performance too. The bass was not heavy but seemed absolutely solid, while the drumming had urgency and precision.

With the *English String Music* disc the massed strings sounded energetic but never harsh. Although the bass was not over-prominent, it had a free-breathing quality which helped bring a fine sense of distance and depth in the soundstage.

Sound Quality: 80%

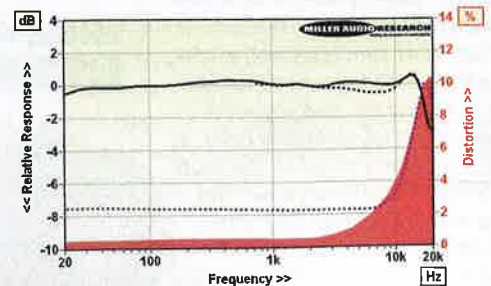


ABOVE: Recessed signal pins are a little fiddly to wire up but make the connections look neat once installed



HI-FI NEWS LAB REPORT

Affordable sibling of the Cadenza Blue [*HFN* Mar '10], this Red shares the same heavyweight (10.7g) body but is equipped with a 'cheaper' aluminium cantilever and line-contact diamond. It's fractionally less sensitive at 385µV but the symmetrical 15cu compliance is ideal for medium/heavy mass arms and, at a substantial 2.5g downforce it tracks like a trooper, surmounting pitches up to 75µm and securely navigating the +15dB/300Hz test groove. Unequalised distortion is just below 3% (re. 1kHz/5cm/sec) and equalised distortion below 2% through bass and midrange through lateral and vertical cuts (re. -8dB). Distortion increases sharply towards ~18kHz [see Graph] but this is a reflection of the Red's wide frequency bandwidth rather than its linearity. Its response shows the familiar 'Cadenza peak' at 12-14kHz, but less emphasised here at +0.5dB. PM



ABOVE: Frequency response (black) vs. distortion (red); lateral (L+R, solid) and vertical (L-R, dashed)

Generator type/weight	Moving Coil / 10.7g
Recommended tracking force	2.2-2.7mN (2.5mN)
Sensitivity/balance (re. 5cm/sec)	385µV / 0.03dB
Compliance (vertical/lateral)	15cu / 15cu
Vertical tracking angle	26 degrees
L/R Tracking ability	75µm / 75µm
L/R Distortion (-8dB, 20Hz-20kHz)	0.65-16.1% / 0.49-10.3%
L/R Frequency resp. (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.4 to -2.8dB / +0.5 to -2.7dB
Stereo separation (1kHz / 20kHz)	35dB / 22dB